September/October 1997 $2.00

MONTANA OUTDOORS

Our Point of View

Eight Montanans—Alva Fortner of Biddle, Robert Larsson of St. Ignatius, John McBride of Libby, Don McKee of Helmville, Pat McVay of Kalispell, George G. Rice of Big Sandy, Patrick Savage of Troy, and James Sivils of Charlo—can help celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Montana's Hunter Education Program by doing what they have done every year for the past forty—graduate another class of eager students.

Can you believe it? Their dedication is shared by more than 1,000 other volunteer instructors across the state, teaching safe use of guns and bows and much more. Approximately 265,000 youngsters and a few oldsters have received instruction (see page 8). That's equivalent to over 40 percent of the adult population of Montana.

TIM CHRISTIE

It has dramatically reduced accidents and fatalities since the 1940s. That's good news, yet it was not enough. In recent years complaints were rising about poor hunter behavior. So our volunteer instructors created a new "Made in Montana" manual that reached the classroom this year.

Not only do students learn how to safely cross a fence with a gun, they learn to know whose fence it is and to make sure they have permission.

Will it make a difference? You bet. The growing success of Block Management, our private land hunting access program, has shown the importance of improved landowner-sportsman relations (see page 25). Combine that with a renewed effort to improve hunter behavior in the field, and the future for these young hunters is bright.

There is even more that can and should be done, and it involves you. It's not enough to make good hunters better—we have to turn bad hunters into good ones. Call TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668) or your local warden when you suspect laws are being violated (see page 34). Don't tolerate poor behavior in your own hunting party or in others you encounter.

The future of hunting will not be determined by antihunters. No, the future of hunting rests in the hands and actions of hunters.

Patrick J. Graham, Director
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

DENVER BRYAN

Hunters and bird dogs are looking forward to pheasant season in October (page 15).

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TIM CHRISTIE

Get Your Elk?

RODNEY SCHLECHT

From Labor Day through Thanksgiving elk hunters greet each other with "Get your elk?"

by JOHN HAVILAND

LAST YEAR'S ELK SEASON began around a campfire at timberline. I barbecued ribs cut from last fall's elk over coals of lodgepole pine that pulsed against the wind. The air finally calmed as the heat of the day dissipated into the night sky.

A bull bugled from down the valley near the beaver dams, its forte notes piercing the night. The bull's next bugle echoed from the north slope above the valley. The bull would range through the lightless hours until another bull answered or the breeze brought the scent of a cow.

In the hour before dawn I boiled water on the stove for oatmeal, then started up the trail leading to the ridgetop as gray light filtered in from the eastern horizon. The land fell away through the timber down to the open foothills. But the dark remained beneath the trees. I fidgeted with my bowstring, waiting for light. One bugle wouldn't hurt, just to see if any elk were around.

A bull slammed back an answer while my bugle was still at my lips. The bull called again as it strode up the ridge. I lay down behind a rotten windfall, hoping the elk would stop to trade insults, at least until shooting light. But the bull came right in. The compressed black of its silhouette slipped among the trees. He circled both ends of my log, then stopped. Out of the silence he bellowed a warning honk, moved off a ways and barked goodbye.

I sat on the log to wait for daylight.

Grouse whortleberry brush carpeted the forest floor. Tiny berries

The bull started coming. Each of his bugles marked his progress. A crown of antlers floated above the curve of the hill, pulsing up and down in step with bull's gait.

A half dozen grouse roosted in the shade on the north face of the ridge.

bled ripe red beneath the thin leaves. A hen blue grouse and her brood waddled past, pecking at berries. They cooed back and forth. I reached for the arrow with the field tip in my quiver, but stopped, thinking of taking one of the grouse on my way back to camp. The grouse flushed at my movement, then settled on the limbs of a lodgepole pine and gawked down. The birds fidgeted on their limbs as I walked beneath them toward a ledge overlooking a hanging valley.

RODNEY SCHLECHT

A stagnant lake sat at the lower end of the bowl. The first wind of the day blew down from the cliffs and rippled the water. I blew the treble of a bugle into the basin to carry through the bare air.

A braying bugle answered from the timber at the head of the lake. The morning's cool air still flowed downhill, carrying my scent toward the elk. I bailed off the top at an angle to get below the elk. The bull called two more times, but I let him stew while I slid down the hill through the scree.

The upturned roots of a fallen tree made a good hiding place. An arrow lay silent on the rest of my bow. I bugled to let the bull know I was near, adding bass grunts at the end of the scale to carry through the trees.

The bull started coming. Each of his bugles marked his progress. A crown of antlers floated above the curve of the hill, pulsing up and down in step with bull's gait.

Even though the bull needed no more coaxing I couldn't resist one more call. But my final note squeaked. The eyes of the bull peered over the lip of ground, seeing right through my camouflage.

The bull swung its head away, the sweep of its antler beams following in an arc. The bull trotted off, then stopped to bark a warning. He continued honking a warning all the way back to his harbor at the head of the lake. Following would be futile.

I hiked back toward camp during the heat of the day. The tracks of an elk overlay my boot prints in the dust of the trail. Along the spine of a finger ridge the trunks of dozens of lodgepole pines had been stripped of their bark. Elk hair and dried velvet stuck to the oozing sap. More trees stood dead or with healed yellow scars from past ruts of bulls working their antlers. Perhaps the bulls used the ridge season after season because of the wind that kept away the mosquitoes of late August.

A half dozen grouse roosted in the shade on the north face of the ridge. I knocked one of the birds from its perch on a log with my grouse arrow. The grouse beat its wing against the arrow shaft through its ribs, then died among the veins of green brush. I sat in the shade and drew the grouse, but wasps gathered at the smell of blood and sent me trotting down the trail.

CONRAD ROWE

I napped in the cool near a spring until the sun had cut its scythe across the sky to sit yellow on the western horizon. The peaks to the east bathed in its soft light. My lonely calls to the elk floated across the land. At dark I gave up to walk the last mile to camp.

Even though my camp box held a cast iron frying pan and flour and butter, I skewered the plucked grouse and starting roasting it plain over the fire. The meat turned dark and tough from the smoke and heat. I broke off the legs and ate those first, then sliced slabs off the breast with my knife, cutting deeper toward the bones as the meat cooked. The only saving grace for the meat was a heavy dose of salt, yet the grouse was the finest meal I had eaten in months. I chewed the last meat from the breast and pitched the bones into the fire, then wiped my greasy hands on my shirt sleeves. I sat near the fire until it had burned down to fluttering coals.

When I walked in the house the next afternoon my wife looked up from her latest Dick Francis mystery. I shook my head to the question in Gail's eyes. After 20 years of marriage we often ask and answer without speaking. It leaves more room for communication.

Gail knew my hunt was a success, even without an elk. The agitation I had left home with remained in the mountains.

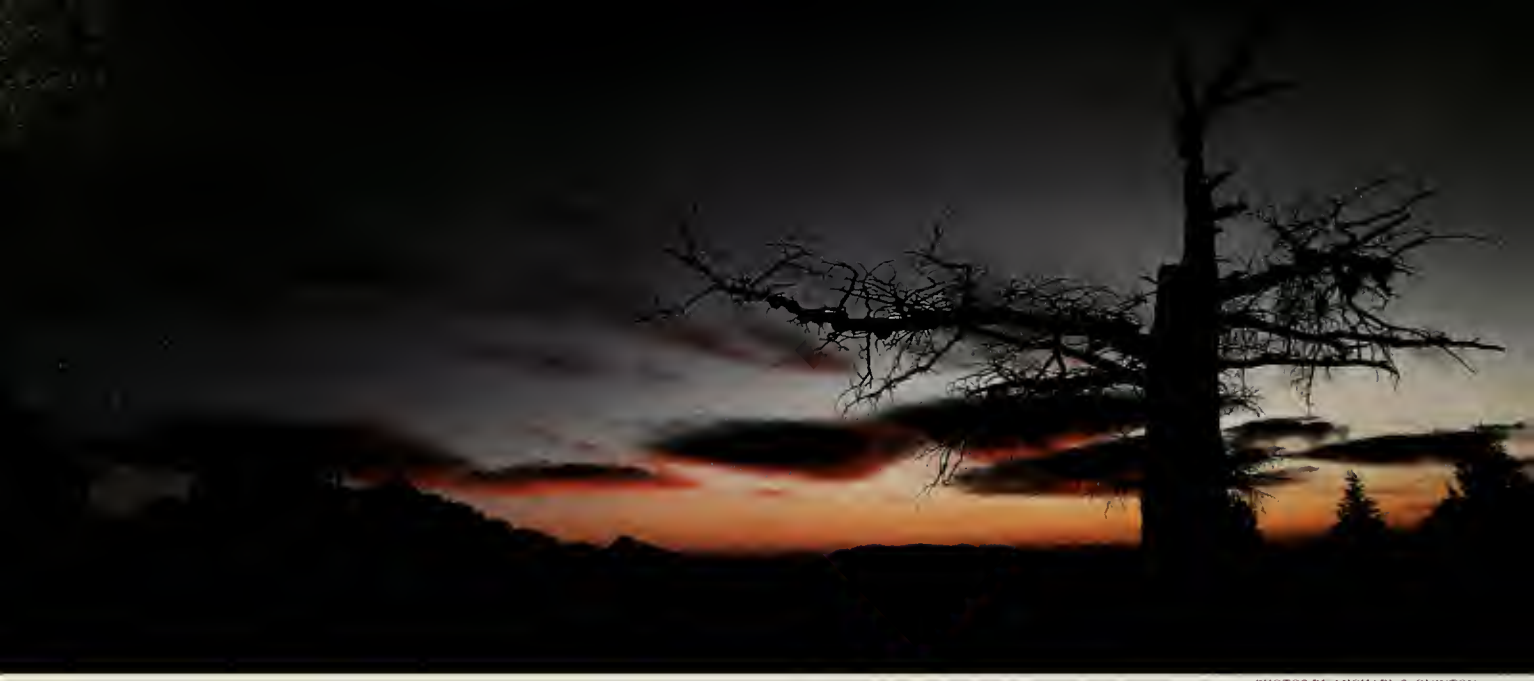
"I suppose you'll be going back when the rifle season opens?" Gail asked, confirming what she already knew.

RIFLE SEASON OPENED with a hope and a prayer. I hunted the edges of the forest early and late in the day. But with the warm weather the elk remained hidden in the moist thickets.

Shots sounded every so often. Two quick shots echoed from the mountain to the north, followed a minute later by the thud of a final shot. "That's a dead elk," I said aloud.

The second day I went into the spruce jungles at first light. Frost bowed the grasses in the bogs. The mud wallows of summer lay frozen.

Game trails ran one into the other. I followed the paths leading into the backcountry, taking the forks that headed toward higher ground. The



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL S. QUINTON

I started climbing from the valley floor an hour before dawn, stumbling in the dark across lines of frozen tracks punched into the snow where the foothills met the timber.

trails led through saddles and across the easy ground, skirting patches of deadfall timber. I stopped every so often to keep my breath and look ahead for the buckskin of a bull's flank.

At mid-morning I stopped on a point to run my eyes over the country. The silver of sagebrush collared parks of bleached bunchgrass. A breeze flowed across the plush of the forest. I roughly triangulated my position from a prominent white rock and the head of a canyon. I had wandered so far back in I told myself to unload my rifle. An elk would be impossible to pack out.

A ridge ran back toward more accessible country. I walked just off the ridgetop where the ground pitched off steep and perhaps a bull would lay bedded. I watched my feet to place each step on the tops of the mops of beargrass to keep from slipping. Yet at one step my foot slid on the slick grass and I went to my knees.

From my lowered position I saw the yellow butt of an elk stand up behind a thicket of stunted lodgepoles. The white of antler turned and disappeared without a sound. The elk had fled so fast I stood back up wondering if it had been there at all; if the white flash had been an antler or whether the wind had moved a branch to let through a ray of sunlight.

Elk finally came out of hiding with the snow in the last week of November. I started climbing from the valley floor an hour before dawn, stumbling in the dark across lines of frozen tracks punched into the snow where the foothills met the timber.

I hurried to arrive in the parks before the rising sun signaled the elk to retreat. Elk had fed on the bunchgrass in the parks during the night, but filtered back in among the Douglas-firs some hours before morning.

Their tracks wandered beneath tall firs, stopping now and again to paw away the snow for a last bite. They turned up the mountain single file. After a mile I gave up. I walked into the sunlight and sat on a log. While chewing a frozen candy bar I gazed across the drainage. A good 75 head of elk grazed along in the wide open. Three full-headed bulls along with a half dozen spikes came into view through my binoculars. The only way to reach them was a full two and a half hour march across the head of the basin.

After awhile a big cow at the head of the herd quit feeding. She stared one way, then another. All the other elk fell in behind her and she led them up the mountain and out of sight.

I made plans to be sitting at the head of the park the next morning where the herd had grazed.

Before leaving home at three the next morning, I took the phone numbers of a couple of cowboys I know in case I required beasts of burden.

I hiked all the way in by flashlight. I waited for day at the head of the park, huddled against the cold. A stroke of gray finally parted the sky from the eastern horizon. The park lay empty. Not so much as a coyote moused in the open.

Yesterday's tracks led off the backside of the mountain toward God only knew.

A friend pulled up at the gas station that evening, a smirk showing through his beard. He stepped out and I noticed a few strands of elk hair on one leg of his wool pants.

"Get your elk?" he asked.

"I see you got yours."

"Shot a spike yesterday. Spent all day today carrying it out one piece at a time."

THE SEASON ENDED Thanksgiving weekend. I took the high trail with a turkey sandwich and piece of mincemeat pie in my pack. The cold from a northeast wind needled through my wool pants. The first hill ground the edge off my enthusiasm. Then the faint "meow" of a cow elk came from across

the dark of the sagebrush and mended my misery. The wind blew wrong, so I hurried back down the hill to conceal my scent.

The outline of a cow elk appeared along the spine of the ridge against the morning sky. Half the clumps of sagebrush started to move. A six-point bull walked into the light of the ridgetop, then back into the dark of the scattered trees.

I slowly opened the bolt of my 7mm Magnum, then slid it closed behind a cartridge. I lay in the snow with the rifle supported by my elbows and the comb of the stock at my cheek. I waited for shooting light, sure the elk would leave before then.

But the elk stayed. The hillside was crowded with elk at sunup. The only bull, though, was a three-point.

The elk finally started drifting up toward the timber. I couldn't stand waiting for the big bull any longer and shot the three-point. A hole appeared on its ribs as the bull went to its knees, then fell over. The cows ran, then stopped as a bunch on a knoll with a cloud of steam from their breath rising over them. The big bull, along with two cows, ran out of a wrinkle in the hill to join the herd.

The elk ran off single file when I stood up out of the snow. The big bull brought up the rear with a high step.

My bull lay in the sage. Its outstretched head faced toward the flight of the herd. Blood drained out of its mouth into the snow. I ran my hand down its flanks with the grain of the hair. I knelt against the bull for quite awhile, with no thought except to look at the mountains building up all around.

That night I drove down to the grocery store with my wife. I met a friend standing at the meat counter.

"Get your elk?" I asked. ■

JOHN FRALEY

Preserving the Tradition

Montana's Hunter Education Program reaches new heights

by JOHN FRALEY and TIM POOL

THANKS TO MONTANA'S volunteer hunter education instructors, a key component in maintaining our rich hunting tradition is better than ever. The product of a grassroots effort, Montana's Hunter Education Program is recognized nationwide for its quality and depth. The program has come a long, long way since its beginning four decades ago.

In 1957, in response to an increase in hunting-related firearm accidents, the Montana Legislature passed a law adopting a "Hunter Safety Program." The law required youngsters 12 and 13 years old to complete a course as a prerequisite for purchasing a hunting license; youngsters 14 and older were exempt if they had a hunting license from a previous year. This course, designed by the National Rifle Association, was taught by volunteer instructors and administered by the Montana Fish and Game Department.

Volunteer instructor Pat McVay, now a 40-year veteran of the program, remembers that first year. He and other Flathead Valley residents had promoted the hunter education bill, and in anticipation of its passing had already ordered National Rifle Association course materials and trained the students in his junior shooting sports club. "As soon as I heard the bill passed we completed the students' cards and sent them in to the Fish and Game Department," says McVay. "But the whole thing was so new that they sent them back and told us to wait until they figured out what to do with them."

Over the years the course content and number of students have mushroomed. In 1961 the law was amended to require youths 12 through 17 to complete the program. What started as a four-hour course soon grew to eight, then 10, and now 17 hours of instruction. The number of instructors has increased tenfold, from about 150 to nearly 1,000 today. These instructors now certify 6,500 students each year.

DENVER BRYAN

The future of hunting lies in the hands of young people now entering the ranks. Montana's volunteer hunter education instructors are making sure they learn to hunt safely, follow game laws, and behave ethically and responsibly in the field.

JOHN FRALEY

JOHN FRALEY

Kalispell-area lead instructor Dan Atkinson (top photo) believes the field portion of the hunter education course gives students a chance to show what they've learned about safety, responsibility, and ethics. Alan Charles (lower photo), a lead instructor in Miles City for many years, had students build and install waterfowl nesting platforms to show them the importance of putting something back as hunters.

KARAN CHARLES

Basic gun handling safety training, which is still the essence of the program, has paid huge dividends in reducing the number of hunting-related accidents. The number has dropped from an average high of 75 accidents and 25 fatalities in the 1940s to the current yearly average of 10 accidents and one fatality. The requirement that big game hunters wear 400 square inches of fluorescent orange, initiated in 1972, has also helped reduce the accident rate.

Responding to social changes, the program has evolved to include such subjects as landowner/sportsman relations, wildlife identification and management, hunter responsibilities, and hunter ethics. Recently, in response to advice from the governor's Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council, the program began to place an even greater emphasis on hunter ethics and behavior.

Over the past three years, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has worked with a committee of volunteer hunter and bowhunter education instructors to develop an improved hunter education manual and new teaching approaches. Hunter education instructors across the state have accepted the new approach with enthusiasm. "One of the great pluses of the new manual is its Montana-specific approach," says Kalispell-area lead instructor Dan Atkinson, who served on the Hunter Education Advisory Committee. "The more instructors use it, the better they like it."

Atkinson says the new approach to teaching the program revolves around the student. "In the past, instructors lectured 90 percent of the time with the students participating maybe 10 percent of the time," he says. "Now instructors and students share equally in participation and learning. We use techniques that draw students in, like hunting ethics scenarios and small group discussion."

Alan Charles, a long-time lead instructor in Miles City and now FWP's landowner/sportsman coordinator in Helena, agrees that the new program will pay dividends. "It's a much less dogmatic approach to instruction," he says. "It requires thoughtful interpretation by both instructors and students, and puts the information into a perspective that the students can relate to."

The new program seeks to maintain Montana's hunting heritage not only by continuing to improve on safety, but by taking the young hunter to a new level of ethics and behavior. National surveys have shown that hunting is strongly supported by the public if hunters are safe, follow game laws, and behave ethically and responsibly. Because of this strong message from the hunting and nonhunting public, the program emphasizes ethics from start to finish. Students are drawn into the history and foundation of hunting and why hunter behavior plays such a key role in the future of hunting. Each student receives a copy of the book *Beyond Fair Chase—The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting*, by Jim Posewitz. Students read the book before the course begins and take part in lessons relating to its major concepts.

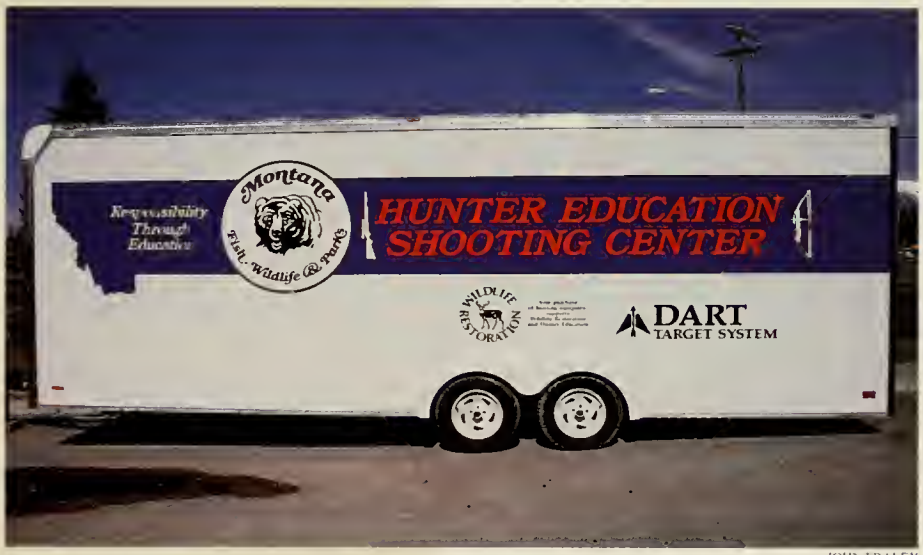
In response to public concern that hunters be law-abiding, instructors emphasize the basis for hunting regulations and the importance of following them closely. FWP game wardens speak to classes about hunter responsibility and answer questions about hunting situations.

Field experience is another major component of the new program. Many hunter education courses around the state have included a field portion for years (veteran instructor Pat McVay has included live firing in his course for 40 years), but it is now required in all courses. Field exercises can include target shooting, black powder techniques, and a hunter's trail requiring students to safely cross fences or streams and make "shoot/don't shoot" decisions.

Dan Atkinson sees the field course as the culmination of the student's experience. "All those nights of

Hunter Education Shooting Center

Montana has acquired a new tool to help large numbers of people enjoy hunting and shooting sports: two state-of-the-art hunter education shooting centers. Consisting of a trailer that houses high-tech shooting gear, each center contains a large screen on which game animals in hunting situations are projected. Other nonanimal target images are also available. Shooters use firearms fitted with lasers in "shoot/no shoot" situations. The computer registers the placement of the shot, freezes the action, and shows the hunter where the shot hit in relation to the animal's vital body area. The experience comes complete with sound effects and has been called "virtual hunting."



JOHN FRALEY

FWP's new mobile shooting centers help youngsters as well as experienced hunters practice realistic hunting situations and evaluate proper shot placement.

"This system is for the whole community," says Dan Atkinson, a volunteer instructor who is trained to operate and coordinate its use in western Montana. "It generates a lot of excitement. Each person who comes through can think of different ways it could be used."

The system is designed to reach a mass audience. FWP has used it at fairs, gun shows, schools, churches, and a variety of civic events. It is not designed to replace actual hands-on field portions of hunter education courses.

Atkinson says the system opens shooting sports and hunting to nontraditional groups. "Nonshooters or people who haven't had the opportunity can see it's a nonthreatening way to try out firearms and bow and arrow," he says.

One of the main goals of the shooting center program is to reinforce hunter ethics and responsibility. After the shooter completes a scenario, an instructor appears on-screen to evaluate the shots taken or not taken, and to point out areas needing improvement. It's especially valuable for youngsters who have little actual hunting experience.

"It takes years to learn how to be a responsible hunter, where to place a shot, when and when not to shoot," Atkinson says. "With this system, youngsters and others with little or no experience can practice realistic situations without the risk of wounding an animal." He adds that even experienced hunters find the system helpful in reinforcing proper shot placement.

To find out more about Montana's Hunter Education Shooting Centers, or to request a reservation for your event, call Tim Pool in Helena at (406) 444-4046.

JOHN FRALEY

JOHN FRALEY

Top: *Nearly 1,000 volunteer hunter education instructors across the state donate more than 60,000 hours to the program annually.*
Above: *Kalispell instructor Jean Kelly, whose daughter has served with her as an instructor, believes the key to involving more women as instructors is to include their families.*

classroom work and study come together in the field course," he says. "The students get the opportunity to demonstrate what they've learned about safety, responsibility, and ethics."

Atkinson feels the field exercise gives students confidence in their abilities because they can apply what they've learned and see themselves succeed. "Students see all the things we've been talking about for two weeks," he says. "They shoot black powder, shotgun, and .22 rifle. They participate in field hunting situations, validate big game tags, and report violations to a game warden. They'll remember their day at the field course for their entire hunting lives."

Around the state, instructors modify the field course to meet local needs and conditions. Alan Charles, who feels that students should be shown the importance of putting something back as hunters, has had them build and install waterfowl nesting platforms as part of the field course. "These students leave something behind that they can go back to," he says. "If someone shoots holes in a nesting box, it's a graphic lesson for students. They learn that if one hunter behaves poorly, it reflects on all hunters."

Along with the new program has come a sharp increase in the training received by volunteer hunter education instructors at statewide and regional workshops. All instructors have had the opportunity to attend training sessions on new teaching techniques, the new Montana-specific hunter education manual, and concepts in *Beyond Fair Chase*.

A dedicated group, Montana's hunter education instructors donate more than 60,000 hours to the program each year. That's the equivalent of about 30 full-time employees. Without the trained volunteer instructor corps, the Hunter Education Program could not function.

The quality and commitment of these instructors is recognized in communities across the state. "People feel that the Hunter Education Program builds responsible citizens in the community," says Dan Atkinson. "They see the quality of the program and want to be part of it." Atkinson has

The Hunter Education Advisory Committee

In 1994, a committee was formed to help FWP plan advances in the Hunter Education Program. From this effort arose the new Montana Hunter Education Manual and other innovations. The following members of the Hunter Education Advisory Committee donated thousands of hours over a two-year period to attend meetings and work in subgroups to make Montana's new Hunter Education Program a reality:

Jim Blossom, Great Falls
Alan Charles, Miles City (now Helena)
Jay Ramlo, Helena
Mel and Cherrie Kieninger, Havre
Clark Riesland, Miles City
Heather Pier, Kalispell
Lowell Wollitz, Helena
Jim Stipcich, Helena
Dan Atkinson, Kalispell
Chuck Nottingham, Havre
Bob Fears, Billings
Ted Goodwin, Billings

seen a steady increase in the number of instructor applicants and in the level of community support. "Businesses contributed lumber and other materials so we could build a storage unit at our field course site," he says. "Others donated money to buy shotguns, .22 rifles, and black powder rifles. Around the region people donate to the program. They see these volunteers giving their time for hunter education and they want to support it."

IN ADDITION TO mandatory hunter education classes for youngsters, a number of adult hunter education classes are taught around Montana. Alan Charles feels these classes are especially important. "I've not been bashful about advocating adult, or continuing, hunter education," he says. "We educate 12-year-olds at an entry level and expect them to know enough after completing the course without any follow-up, but we know better."

Charles sees continuing hunter education as essential in maintaining high standards of hunter behavior. "The term 'hunter ethics' scares people," he says. "People think you are going to preach to them. Hunter *behavior* is really what we're talking about. The key is not to preach to people, but to get them to see themselves."

In the continuing hunter education program, Charles recommends that young hunter education graduates and older hunters interact. "If it is done right, this can break down a lot of barriers. I believe it is very effective for youngsters to share what they've learned and perhaps encourage adults to see themselves through a 12-year-old's eyes."

Another facet of the new Hunter Education Program is the increasing number and role of female instructors (see sidebar, p. 14). FWP has hosted a number of all-female courses to provide a comfortable experience for women who wish to get involved in hunter education. More women have been enrolling in standard and mixed-adult courses as well.

Jean Kelly, a Kalispell instructor, has taught both types of courses, but sees the mixed class as best in the long term. "I think the best way to recruit women is through the adult classes," she says. "If the class is presented right, most women will not be intimidated by the more experienced men taking the course with them. But it's not the answer for everyone; some women do feel they need to gain a few more capabilities before they take a class with males."

JOHN FRALEY

Field exercises may include black powder techniques as well as target shooting with conventional shotguns and rifles.

Kelly, whose daughter has served with her as an instructor, believes the key to involving more women as instructors is to include their families. "A woman with a husband and children is not going to be able to commit the time without the complete support of her family," she says. "There are just too many other things going on in her life. I know that the biggest factor in my continued involvement in hunter education has been the support of my family."

Results from a survey of current female instructors in northwestern Montana support the view that family involvement is key, she adds. Kelly has one more piece of advice to help bridge the gender gap in the hunter education instructor corps: "We have to continually tell women how badly they are needed."

With the help of many dedicated people, Montana's Hunter Education

Program has evolved from its modest beginnings to meet the changing needs and expectations of society. Today, it is much more than a course in safe gun handling, important as that may be. It is a stepping stone to lifelong maturation as a hunter and involvement in preserving Montana's hunting heritage. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: *You can help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the program by thanking your local hunter education instructors for their time and commitment. Even better, consider becoming an instructor yourself. For more information on how to become an instructor, stop at any FWP office or talk to an instructor in your area.*

One Woman's Experience as a Hunter Education Instructor

Janette Turk of Libby is a volunteer instructor in the bowhunter portion of the Hunter Education Program. Her responses to a recent survey of female instructors illustrate a positive approach to the challenges women face as they take part in hunter education:

Janette Turk

...My experiences as a bowhunter education instructor have been, for the most part, very positive. My fellow instructors (all men) have treated me with respect and have never given "inappropriate" remarks from the classroom any validity and neither have I. These remarks are not targeted at me in general. The remarks range from tee shirts saying, "My wife gave me a choice: hunting or her; I'm gonna miss her." I think that's funny. In fact, I'd like one in reverse. You see, it's how you react that sets the stage of how the class (mostly men and boys) will respond to you. Another remark: Why do you hunt? "To get away from my old lady," is a common response. I always see eyes on me when that kind of comment is made. I usually laugh or say, "Yeah, we all need our space sometimes." Once again, reaction is important.

...The first night of class is always the test for me. You can just feel that some folks are wondering what I might possibly know about hunting or the woods in general. Fortunately, I have years of practical experience under my belt both with a bow and a rifle. I have earned respect over the years; I can confidently hunt with or without anyone and feel perfectly comfortable. This feature definitely helps! I show up at class prepared to talk about the material, and my fellow instructors allow me plenty of room to speak. Confidence will help any female entering into this endeavor.

...By the second night, I'm one of the gang and I am asked for my opinion on many different topics.

...I see past students around my community and they give me an update of progress, share a story, or just wave. Being an instructor has opened doors for me to make a difference for our hunting and recreation future.

...Negative experiences are usually caused from lack of time to prepare for class. This "time" problem faces all instructors. It's called life. We have always pulled things together. I think only we instructors notice when things are not flowing well. The class seems to like our presentations.

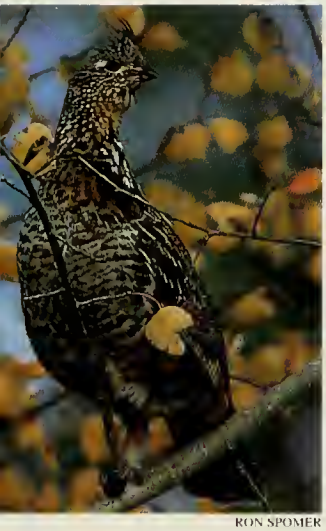
...I would like an official vest that actually fits me. Large or extra-large just does not work. I'm swimming in it.

...I love the outdoors and put on many miles hiking to hunt and recreate yearly. I find that most men like the fact that I enjoy the outdoors as much as they do. My husband has had men comment to him, wishing that their spouse would "get into it" as much as I do. My husband and I have so many great memories to share because we hunt and hike together. Close friendships with men and women have developed because I hunt.

...Integrating more females into the education program is very important to me. "Hunter's widow" is not part of my vocabulary. Some females set themselves up with an "I can't do it" attitude. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em is my philosophy. It's a blast!

The Color of Autumn

A bird hunting odyssey



RON SPOMER

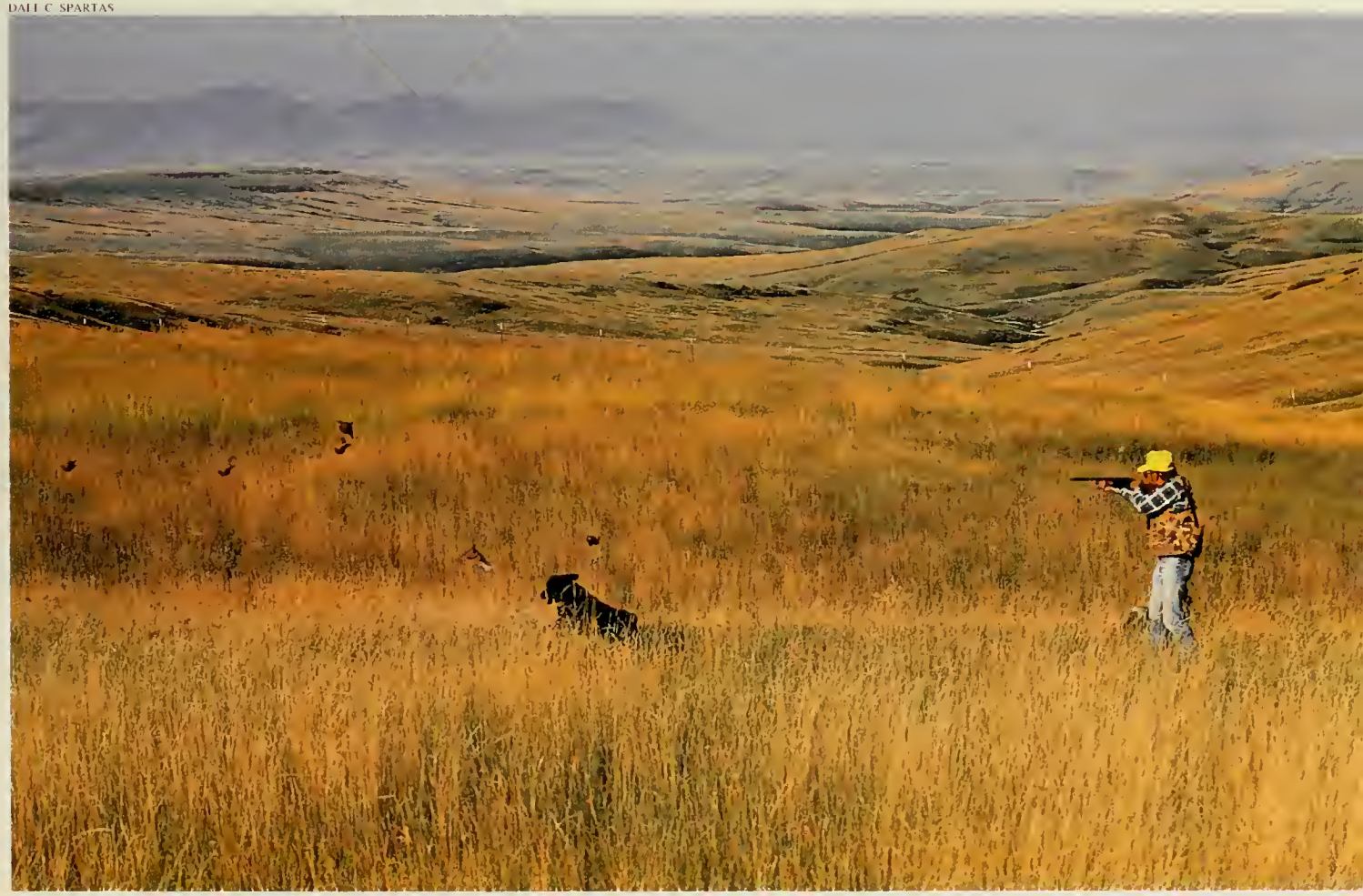
DENVER BRYAN

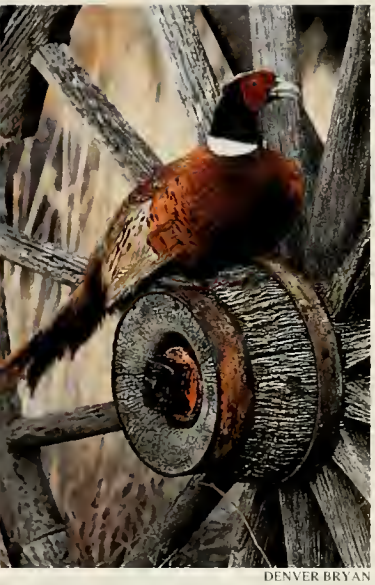
It begins in September, with the days a little warm for hunting. But the dog has waited nine months for this, and so have you. You head for the trout stream where you heard the ruffed grouse drumming last spring. Tough shooting, but it's cool among the golden aspens and there's plenty of water for the dog.

Out on the plains, Hungarian partridge await. You'll walk hard through miles of grass to find them, but the covey rise makes it all worthwhile. A chirping blur of rust and gray against the tawny prairie. Mark them well, you may pick up some singles.

RICHARD MOUSEL

DALE C. SPARTAS





DENVER BRYAN

October means frosty mornings and long-tailed roosters. You'll never forget that crimson cheek patch and white neck-ring etched against a bright blue sky.

DENVER BRYAN

DENVER BRYAN

The dogs turn it up a notch for pheasants—for them, it's the intoxicating scent. For us, whether we're 16 or 60, it's the breathtaking beauty of the birds. Burnished copper, gold, red—the color of autumn.

White-

tailed Homesteaders

by Sam Curtis

HOMESTEADING HAS LONG been considered part of the colorful history of Montana, yet we tend to think of it in terms of the people who have settled the state, not in light of white-tailed deer moving in. Nevertheless, whitetails have their own latterday history of homesteading in Montana, a history that has bolstered their numbers, despite some dismal lows, since Meriwether Lewis and William Clark first slogged up the Missouri River at the start of the nineteenth century.

The pattern of human settlement and the changes it imposed on the country's landscape, from the East Coast all the way to Montana, set the scene for the whitetail homesteading that still continues in some parts of the country and the state as we get ready to bump against the twenty-first century.

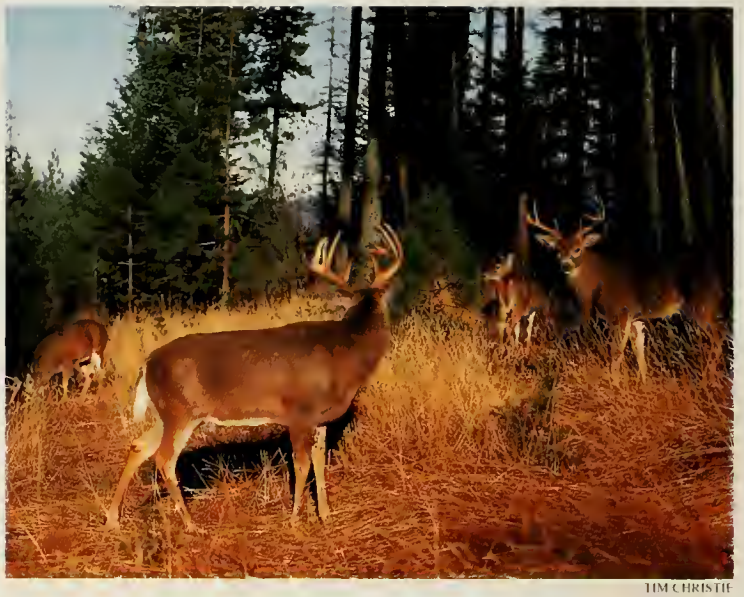
Although Native Americans were the original "homesteaders" in this country, they did not establish permanent home sites or drastically change the character of the landscape. They did, on occasion, poke a pitch stick into a campfire and set ablaze a forest in order to put plant succession back to a stage that was attractive to whitetails. And they did use these burned areas for prime hunting grounds as deer congregated on them to eat forage and browse rejuvenated by fire.

But it was European settlers who brought widespread changes to the land. Starting on the East Coast, early colonists picked rocks, cut trees, and pulled stumps, changing forest to field so they could scratch a living from the thin veneer of topsoil. Wherever settlers put down roots, whitetail populations first thrived on the new growth of vegetation, then withered in the wake of subsistence hunting. This boom-and-bust scenario became the standard for whitetails as human settlement spread across the country.

By the early 1800s the major push was afoot to move west, and worn-out East Coast farms were abandoned. As settlers wagoned into the country around the Great Lakes, the fall of the native forests to the farmer's axe and lumberman's saw started the familiar new growth of bushes and shrubs that enhanced whitetail habitat. And as settlers moved into the Midwest and West and started controlling periodic natural range fires on open grassland,

JIM CHRISTIE

CONRAD ROWE



TIM CHRISTIE

Resourceful and opportunistic, whitetails are at home in agricultural areas, foothill forests, and suburbs of Montana cities.

DONALD M. JONES

woody vegetation grew up where crops were not planted. Instead of finding only river and creek bottoms in which to hide and feed, the whitetail was able to expand its range into areas that had formerly been prairie.

But there was always the same hitch in the whitetail's future—uncontrolled subsistence and market hunting. Between 1850 and 1900, the heyday of western expansion, more hunting pressure was brought to bear on North American wildlife than at any other time in history. Under the gun of farmers trying to survive and hunters living by selling hides, the whitetail was pounded down to near extinction in many parts of the country.

But what was brutal for whitetail populations may have been life saving for many a westward-moving homesteader. According to William T. Hornaday: "To the colonist of the East and the pioneer of the West, the white-tailed deer was an ever present help in time of trouble. Without this omnipresent animal, and the supply of good meat that each white flag represented, the commissariat difficulties of the settlers who won this country...would have been many times greater than they were....On every eastern pioneer's monument, the whitetail should figure...."

The gift the whitetail gave was expensive. From a North American population estimated as high as 34 million at the beginning of the 1500s, whitetail numbers were reduced to what some experts figure was only 300,000 by the end of the nineteenth century. People stopped hunting whitetails simply because they became so difficult to find.

From this low point, the scene was set for a whitetail comeback. The country's conservation conscience was beginning to develop by the beginning of the twentieth century. State hunting regulations were growing a few teeth, and restrictions in the interstate commerce of wild game were put in effect under the Lacey Act of 1900. These factors, combined with the growth of agriculture and logging in Montana, cleared the way for white-tailed homesteaders to take their turn at settling in growing numbers throughout the state.

According to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) whitetail researcher Gary Dusek, there was a

BARBARA THOMAS

Irrigation ditches and canals supply drinking water for homesteading whitetails and foster woody vegetation that provides forage and cover.

time lag between the arrival of Montana's human homesteaders and the homesteading activity of Montana's whitetails. "We didn't really have a lot of whitetail activity and abundance until after the 1940s and into the fifties and sixties. I grew up on a farm in Havre, and even in the 1960s we very rarely saw a deer, much less a whitetail. Now they're all over the place."

The growth of whitetail populations, at least in eastern Montana, came in the wake of extensive agricultural development. We turned large expanses of bunchgrass—suitable mainly for buffalo and elk—into a mosaic of agricultural crops. We put irrigation ditches and canals around the fields, and woody vegetation grew up beside them. The ditches and canals raised and stabilized the water table, creating more extensive wooded floodplains with lush understories of shrubs and herbs. Then we eliminated or drastically reduced the whitetail's natural predators. All these changes created a more diverse and stable habitat for whitetails than had previously been provided by nature. In short, we served up a gigantic garden with adjacent escape cover, and the whitetails came homesteading to eastern Montana by the thousands with little but domestic dogs and hunters to bother them.

The scene has been subtler in the western part of the state where white-tailed deer have always been more abundant. According to Dusek, "We can only hypothesize that land use practices there may have improved the lot of whitetails. Fire suppression may have created some of the winter range conditions that exist there today. Also some logging on summer ranges has created a mosaic of different age stands of shrub and tree communities that probably has contributed to the proliferation of whitetails."

The whitetail homesteading spirit is still up and running, Dusek says. "I think whitetails are still pioneering in some parts of the state, although it probably isn't as prolific as it was twenty to thirty years ago. They still may be doing some pioneering in southwestern Montana and some in the central part of the state."

A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO I received permission to do some grouse hunting on a rancher's land along a mountain range in southwestern Montana. Returning to the ranch house to extend my thanks for a good day, I asked the rancher if he'd ever seen a whitetail on his place.

"Not until recently," the rancher told me. "In 1978, I saw a couple of yearling bucks. That's the same summer my neighbor noticed them. The following summer we saw some groups of does, probably yearlings. And the next year, 1980, we started seeing an occasional doe with fawn. Now, there are whitetails living all through those aspens up there."

There had been a resident population of whitetails down along the local creek for at least 30 years, the

rancher told me. But in the foothill patches of aspen, three or four miles away, no one could remember ever having seen a whitetail until recently. No one had been hunting the newcomers either; I was the first person to ask permission.

What the rancher had observed is typical of the whitetail's pattern when moving into new areas. The yearling bucks are the true pioneers. In any established whitetail population, 40 to 50 percent of the yearling males leave the herd every year.

Their departure seems to have nothing to do with population density, availability of food, or the condition of the habitat. But the bucks leave like clockwork, typically in November. The fact that they strike out for new ground just before and during the main part of the rut suggests that hormonal changes associated with sexual maturity prompt some of the pioneering spirit.

The sighting of a young buck in a place thought to be out of the normal range of whitetails is mistakenly attributed by many hunters to the temporary wanderlust of the rut. Yet such sightings are clues to locating new hunting grounds.

RODNEY SCHLECHT

Always alert, whitetail does teach their fawns the skills needed for survival.

There are a few things to keep in mind when looking for possible new whitetail settlements.

First, even though many yearling bucks will leave their parent herd each year, young does don't move into new territory until their parent herd has started to fill up its present range. Consequently, newly occupied whitetail habitat won't show noticeable population growth until nearby whitetail populations are on the upswing.

Second, in areas where changes in seasonal weather force whitetails to migrate, some early territorial imprinting may take place in both male and female fawns. As a result, pioneering deer may take up new residence near traditional winter ranges or migration routes. These are areas worth monitoring for possible new arrivals.

Check areas with a diversity of low, woody vegetation. Look for brushy fields, hedgerows, draws, and drainage bottoms. These places provide both food and cover for the whitetail.

In forested sections of the country, you'll most likely find homesteading whitetails heading for areas that are in early stages of forest development. Older forests block out the sun and often have sparse understories. On the other hand, young forests provide more variety of forage within easy reach of the deer.

In open sections of the country, the best method for discovering new whitetail hunting grounds is to use the very things that have made this part of the country a garden for the deer: the irrigation ditches and canals.

The most obvious commodity supplied by ditches is water. And in country that naturally runs toward the dry and dusty, the presence of water can mean the difference between homesteading in a particular area or leaving it alone. Since ditches often stretch for miles from their creek or river sources, they have opened up large areas of land that are worth looking at.

Besides supplying drinking water for homesteading deer, the ditches foster woody vegetation that provides forage and cover. In addition, the crops that the ditches irrigate are food sources for whitetails looking for new homes.

But the ditches also provide you with an excellent, if somewhat wet, roadway to use in looking for new whitetail populations. They can get you into the very heart of potential hunting grounds. By walking ditches, you can get into impossible looking cover that often opens up into hidden clearings. Hillside ditches give you a vantage point from which to look down into surrounding thickets. And these waterways always lead where homesteading whitetails are likely to go, because the ditches themselves help grow some of the most attractive whitetail habitat.

There are also those transitional habitats where open valley or prairie meets wooded foothills, places where typical whitetail habitat and typical mule deer habitat collide with one another. This seems to be a zone where whitetails do some seasonal homesteading on the mule deer side of the equation. Where fingers of aspen poke back into pine and fir foothills, whitetails often take advantage—in summer and fall—of the vegetative diversity offered by *ecotones*, the boundaries between two plant communities. You may be surprised to find whitetails taking up seasonal residence at much higher elevations than you'd expect and seeking cover in the foothill forests where you'd think you would find only muleys.

Once winter snows start to sock in, however, these seasonal whitetail homesteaders begin to drift back down to the lower elevations of riparian areas.

At the heart of the whitetail's homesteading behavior is a personality that is resourceful and opportunistic, more able to cope than the mule deer with the current human land use practices in Montana.

Ironically, despite his apparent calm disposition, the mule deer is more disturbed by the hubbub of human activity than the excitable whitetail. When pressured, over time, the muley is more likely to move. The whitetail simply changes his behavior and adapts to the new situation. He homesteads wherever he can, including, as we've found recently, in the suburbs of Montana cities.

So, like many human homesteaders, Montana's whitetail homesteaders seem determined to make a niche for themselves and thrive in our state. ■

BLOCK MANAGEMENT:

What landowners and hunters say

by Alan Charles

HOWARD JOHNSON

This year, more than seven million acres of private land will be open to public hunting through FWP's Block Management Program.

Most people who used block management in 1996 liked what they found. That's not to say everyone likes block management, or likes everything about it. But survey data gathered from landowners and hunters indicate that people who use the program really like it.

"Without exception," said one block management area cooperator, "hunters had more respect for us as landowners. It's the finest hunting season I've actually enjoyed in 15 years. Prior to this one, I dreaded seeing the season come."

Another respondent, a hunter, wrote: "The Block Management Program is a super program and I applaud you folks for the hard work you put into it. [It] is a great solution to the ever-growing problem of locked-up private lands due to leases and other closures. I encourage you to continue building the program."

Like all surveys, this one resulted in a detailed report complete with charts and graphs. But perhaps even more revealing than the stark lines of the charts and graphs are the actual words of the people who used the program. Of the more than 4,500 written comments, most were positive.

WHAT LANDOWNERS SAID...

How satisfied were you with the overall Block Management Program?

- It's nice to get some compensation for the time and effort spent trying to manage hunter access. We support FWP's attempt to recognize landowner contributions.
- Hunters seem more aware that hunting on private land is a privilege and show more respect.
- I feel that I am part of a team to make this a better world. We needed a third party to get landowners and hunters together for their mutual benefit.

- Too many people seem to feel that block management takes away landowner rights and authority and gives them unlimited access....
- I think the payment should be doubled.
- We had way too many hunters.

How well is the program working to manage hunters?

- The program worked excellently for us. Hunters respected the signs and we didn't have people on our property without permission. Damage was the least we have had due to knowing who was hunting on any given day....
- It has made managing the hunters much easier for me. The permission slips are a big help.
- It brings hunters onto our land in a much more organized manner.

- A few hunters felt that they had total rights to every area of the land that was placed in the Block Management Program.
- We reserved days for hunters, and they didn't show or let us know they weren't coming so we could give the days to other hunters.
- I guess the problem I have with this program is that it ties me down, giving permission slips.

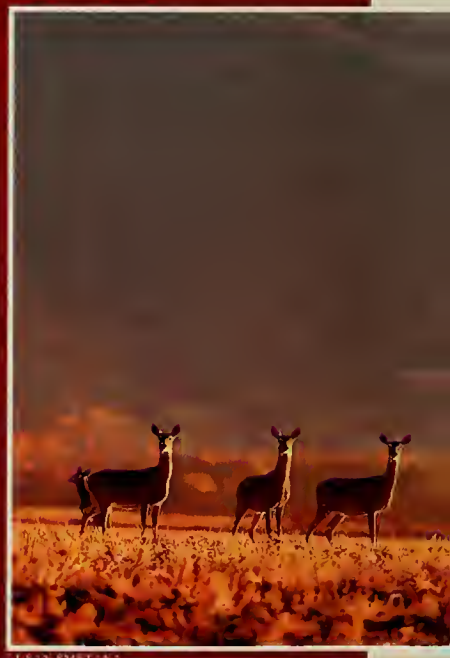
How well is the program working to manage game numbers?

- The program is an excellent way to provide hunters a place to hunt and hike. [It] also helps in controlling wild game numbers. This is a benefit to our operation by making forage available for domestic livestock.
- I think it worked really well. I know that the wildlife has to be managed and this is one way to do it.
- I think this was a very worthwhile program and a good way to thin the deer population. It's better than seeing them die in our yards from starvation.

- A lot of bucks were taken, but only about 10 does. We are now being overrun with does. It seems it has gone from getting meat to being a trophy hunt.
- [I] would like to see more hunters willing to shoot does.
- I had a lot more bird hunters show up—I let them hunt, but really like to see a few birds around.

How is the Block Management Program affecting landowner/sportsman relations?

- A world of difference! I didn't see anyone driving across my land this year.
- The program allowed us to go over the rules and requirements with each individual or group as we issued the permission slips, so we had fewer misunderstandings.
- [It] gave us a chance to talk to hunters face to face and required written permission. This helped make hunters more aware of [our] needs.
- The hunters appreciate the program and want it to succeed as much as we do.
- Most hunters were very courteous and very enjoyable to have as guests.
- We thought we had a nicer bunch of hunters. They were helpful in working with the program, thoughtful about what time they came to get permission. We enjoyed the time we spent with them.



WHAT HUNTERS SAID...

How satisfied were you with the block management areas you hunted this past fall?

- My 7-year-old son and I had a great time in the field, and that is what it's about.
- 1996 was the first time I hunted. I didn't get my antelope, but it wasn't for lack of game available. I am 69 years old. Had the greatest three days of my life. I am very thankful for your Block Management Program.
- This is an excellent program. I had almost quit bird hunting because of poor access. The Block Management Program has made access much easier.

- Getting permission is far too time-consuming. Too many hunters are allowed on the property. The landowner doesn't really care about the quality of the hunt—just about getting his "fee per head."
- I think FWP should make sure that the block management area has plenty of game before they make it a block management area.
- These walk-in areas are only for young people in perfect shape. A person should be able to drive to retrieve game if there is a good road.

STEVEN ARYAN

SPOMER/HAZELWOOD

Were you satisfied with the way access is managed?

- The Block Management Program gave me an opportunity to hunt antelope without the interference of a large number of hunters. Also, the maps provided were extremely valuable....
- I work as a professional resources manager, and I think the Block Management Program is the finest example of cooperation between groups, and offers hunters and landowners a great opportunity to get to know one another.

- Neighboring landowners are now more reluctant to allow hunting. They all say, "Use block management."
- Some landowners allow way too many hunters.
- Sometimes it's very difficult to obtain permission. You drive long distances to see the owners and then they are not home....

How well is the program working to manage game numbers?

- I spent four days hunting, saw elk every day except one. While I saw two or three spikes, I couldn't get a clean shot through the timber.
- I got the flu, but my two partners went without me and one got a 7X7 bull.
- I should have taken a shotgun because there seemed to be an abundance of birds I hadn't noticed in past years.

- Too many hunters. Number of hunters needs to be limited. With the number of hunters I saw it won't take but a couple of seasons to kill off the mature mule deer bucks and antelope bucks.
- Hunting areas I hunted had more game before they became block management.

How is the Block Management Program affecting landowner/sportsman relations?

- The program has made it much easier to identify and contact sportsman-friendly landowners....
- You are now able to find a place to hunt, know who owns it, and be sure you are on the right property. The landowner now knows who and when someone is on the place.
- I think it's a wonderful program! It makes the hunters responsible for their actions and gives the landowner confidence....
- It gets people back to asking permission and communicating more. It also gets the landowner to be more trustful of hunters.
- I feel that by stopping and talking to landowners about where to hunt and where to find the game instills a more trusting and confident attitude in the landowner about the hunter and all hunters in general.
- I get to talk with and visit some very nice people.

Montana's Block Management Program has undergone many changes since its modest beginnings in 1985. The biggest change came last year, when a new source of funding allowed a near-doubling of the program. In 1996, more than 130,000 hunters recreated on the 7 million acres made available by 881 block management cooperators.

Of course, not everybody was happy with the 1996 program. Some people disliked particular elements, such as administrative requirements or the compensation system, while others had bad experiences with hunters, landowners, or the hunt itself. And some people were philosophically opposed to or simply dissatisfied with some of the benefits provided under this program.

The recent survey of block management landowners and hunters yielded a wealth of information that will help FWP and the Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council evaluate the expanded program. As a result, some changes have already been incorporated into the 1997 program to address concerns identified by hunters and landowners.

For the 1997 hunting season, block management area boundaries will be better marked, and regional staff will attempt to make maps and regional tabloids more informative. Hunter use will be tracked more closely, with most landowners limiting permission slips to daily or three-day maximum terms, and phone audits will be conducted. More block management areas will incorporate hunter management systems to balance hunter numbers with available hunting opportunities and game populations. Administratively, the forms and contracts will be streamlined, and efforts will be made to solicit hunter and landowner comments throughout the season.

This Buck's For

Editor's note—Dan Wentz, a hunter who participated in the 1996 Block Management Program, enclosed this story with his survey form. "I wrote this for my son," said Wentz, "but it's also a tribute to the ranchers and FWP people who have worked together so others can have the opportunity to share memories that last forever." We are pleased to share Dan's story.

Aaron Wentz

Many times over the years I've been asked the question,"Why do you hunt?" I used to answer, "For the food and to experience the outdoors." Those things are still important to me, but now I have a deeper, more personal reason.

In the fall of 1986 my son, Aaron, and I went on his and my first antelope hunt—he had just turned 12 the August before. We went through the standard preparations, starting with his completing hunter education class. We shot a lot of targets, learned where to hold on animals in different positions, and discussed the ethics of hunting.

As with any hunting or camping trip, anticipation plays a big part. This was going to be all new for us, a different animal, a new type of terrain, his first hunt ever, and a brand-new hunting partner for me.

I didn't know a 12-year-old could ask so many questions. Dads never have enough time to spend on questions. This dad wishes he would

You, Son

by Dan Wentz

have taken that time now.

The hunt was all it could have been and more. We hunted on a ranch that was open to anyone. All that was asked was that you sign in and give your camp location. You were expected to respect the property and all that was on it.

Aaron and I made camp the afternoon before opening day. We sat around the fire that night talking about the next day's hunt. I don't think either of us slept a whole lot that night.

We were up well before dawn—I remember it seemed to take two hours to get light enough to shoot. We found a small bunch of antelope not far from camp, and soon learned something about the legendary eyesight and swiftness of these animals. We tried to ambush them twice, but they escaped without us firing a shot.

As we made our way back to the truck two curious fawn antelope came within shooting range. Aaron got all excited and although they were legal I talked him out of taking one. Later he would be happy that he held off.

After a snack (12-year-olds will eat a full meal before 10:00 a.m.), we hiked to the top of a butte so we could glass the area. In the distance we could count upwards of 80 antelope around us. Most were on posted land a half-mile off. As we stood there talking and wishing, a buck tore out from beneath our butte. He had been bedded in the shade on the side opposite our approach.

When I gave a sharp yelp the buck stopped and turned sideways. I shot quickly and bagged my first antelope. The only thing better would have been Aaron shooting instead. In that instant I was able to teach Aaron a lesson I learned long ago about stopping an animal for a quick look if it hasn't already seen you.

We got through the backslapping and then on to taking care of the antelope. It's much easier to show someone how to dress and skin a game animal than to tell them how to do it. He paid close attention and when we were finished I told him, "Now that you've seen it done, you get to do your own."

That opportunity came the next day. We found five does about 10:00 a.m. feeding in some winter wheat. By walking in the opposite direction and dropping into a gully we were able to work our way toward them. We started out walking, eventually dropping to hands and knees, and finally crawled the last 300 yards on our bellies through some very healthy prickly pear along the edge of the wheat field. They were still a good 200 yards away.

We looked them over, decided on one, and waited until it was broadside. It's hard for dads to watch their offspring do things in life without saying too much. As I lay there watching the barrel moving around quite a bit, I said, "Let's try something." I carefully removed my boots to make a rest with them for his rifle.

As I watched through my binoculars, dust appeared behind the front quarter of the doe. Shot through the heart, she ran 100 yards before collapsing. I was probably more pleased than Aaron.

Now it was his turn to dress his animal. He did great until a slight miscue made the rest of the job more than a little aromatic. Luckily he was about done, but he sure tried to get ol' dad to finish.

As we made our way back to the truck I remember looking at Aaron and saying, "It doesn't get much better than this!" He looked back and said, "We have to do this more often, just the two of us. This is the best trip I've ever had."

We had more camps and hunts together, but nothing could compare to that first one. Thinking back, I wish we could have spent more time together—I regret it, not taking the time was my fault. You have to make a living, but you need to set priorities where they belong. I found this out when I lost Aaron forever in this life. There is no greater loss than losing a child. The sadness, sorrow, and longing for them never lessens, you just live with it.

Aaron and I never got to go antelope hunting again, but a few years ago his mom and I went. We camped out in a tent and Carol and I shared the memories I had of Aaron and our trip. We hunted on a block management area—a place where the game department and the landowner have worked together to open land to public hunting.

I was able to get within 100 yards of nice buck and make a good shot. As I walked up to the antelope and saw what a beautiful animal he was, my thoughts returned to my son and how I wished that this was his buck and that we were slapping each other on the back and enjoying the moment together. Anyway, son, if you can read this, this buck is for you. Thanks for the memories—I sure miss and love you.

I didn't realize until we went through a game check station that I should have the buck scored. He drew quite a bit of attention there; the game department said they had pictures of him taken earlier, and the warden in the area was kind enough to send them to me. The buck ranks fourteenth in the Montana records and in the top 25 percent in Boone and Crockett.

Thanks again.

One of the strengths of the Block Management Program is its flexibility. This is not a one-size-fits-all kind of program, but instead is designed to be crafted to meet the needs of landowners and hunters within each region.

Ultimately, the success or failure of the program lies not in how many dollars FWP spends to enroll how many landowners, but rather on how well relationships are built between the landowners and hunters who use the program. As one hunter put it, "This program is a super good thing. Every state faces the same problems on private land. This program shows that the FWP people in Montana care about the quality of hunting and fishing and are willing to work to open more land in the state."

That's true. We at FWP do care about the needs of landowners and sportsmen and women. We will work hard to make programs like block management available, and we'll work hard to make them accountable and acceptable to the people who use them. But in the long run, it is the landowners and hunters who will determine whether the Block Management Program as it existed in 1996, or as it evolves in the years to come, achieves its goal of maintaining public hunting access to private land in Montana. ■

For information about the 1997 Block Management Program (names of cooperators, rules, opportunities, etc.), contact the FWP regional headquarters in the area you plan to hunt.

To obtain a copy of the 1996 Block Management Hunter & Landowner Survey, write to:

FWP—Field Services
1420 East Sixth Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

MIKE KORN

Among landowners...

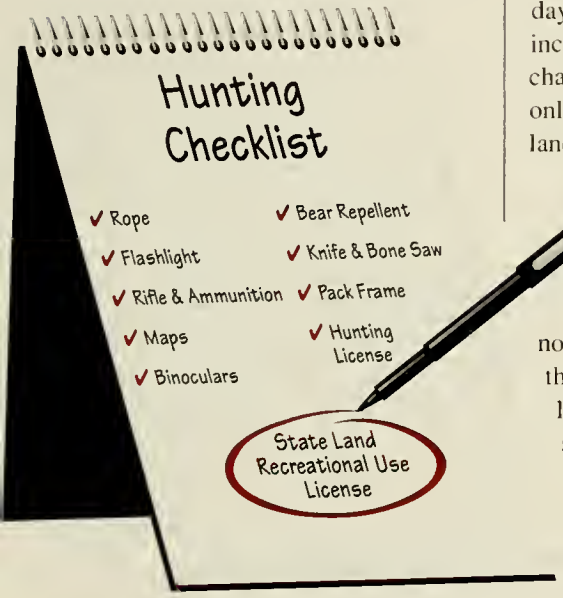
- 80% were satisfied with the Block Management Program.
- 94% said they'd like to continue participating in the program.
- 70% said block management was important as a way of managing hunters on the farm or ranch.
- 75% were satisfied with the various payments offered under the incentives portion of the program.
- 96% said the majority of hunters abided by the ranch rules.
- 62% felt the Block Management Program had improved their relationships with hunters.
- 90% felt that FWP employees had been responsive to their needs.

Among hunters...

- 77% were satisfied with hunting opportunities on block management areas.
- 94% felt the rules were reasonable.
- 72% found the game animals they expected to see.
- 67% were successful in taking game.
- 89% were satisfied with obtaining permission by person-to-person contact with the landowner.
- 92% felt landowners were courteous.
- 87% felt landowners were helpful.
- 68% felt the program improved landowner/sportsman relations.

GOT YOUR STATE LAND RECREATIONAL USE LICENSE?

Before heading out on your first hunting trip of the season, it's important to know the ownership boundaries of the land you'll be on. You should also familiarize yourself with the regulations associated with that land. Since state-owned land usually is not posted or fenced, it is your responsibility to know where you are and on whose land you are hunting.



When Montana became a state in 1889, the federal government (under the Enabling Act) granted Sections 16 and 36 of every township to the state to help support public education. Nowadays, for a variety of reasons—including land exchanges and purchases—state-owned land is not limited only to sections 16 and 36. School trust lands today account for more than 5 million acres in Montana.

Although Montana's 1972 Constitution designated school trust lands as "public" lands, this designation did not override any of the provisions of the 1889 Enabling Act. In fact, the 1972 Constitution stipulated that school trust land must be used for the sole purpose originally granted—i.e., to support public education. Revenue from school trust lands, including that from recreational license fees, contributed more than $51 million to Montana's public schools last year.

Again, before you hit the road, remember that anyone 12 or older who plans to use school trust lands for recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, or hiking must have a state land recreational use license. Recreationists must follow all regulations that govern use of these lands, and violators are subject to civil prosecution and fines of up to $1,000 per day.

State land recreational use licenses are available from any FWP-authorized license agent or Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) area office (individual licenses are $10 and family licenses are $20). To receive a pamphlet explaining the regulations or a map showing state land, contact any FWP license agent or DNRC, FWP, BLM, or U.S. Forest Service office. For more information, call your local DNRC office or phone (406) 444-2074.

INAUGURAL LEOPOLD EDUCATION PROJECT WORKSHOP SET FOR OCTOBER

In the half-century since *A Sand County Almanac* was first published, Aldo Leopold's conservation classic has been reprinted in nine languages and read by millions of people. Its philosophical underpinnings have become the call for prudent land management and ecosystem preservation throughout the world. His prophetic words ring truer today than ever.

The Leopold Education Project (LEP), an interdisciplinary educational program based on Leopold's writings, strives to teach the public about humanity's ties to the natural world and to provide leadership in the effort to conserve and protect the earth's natural resources. To this end, the LEP staff has created an educational curriculum targeted for grades 6 to 12 called "Lessons in a Land Ethic." In hopes of promoting prudent land stewardship, the LEP materials provide students with an opportunity to increase their appreciation for the land, expand their ecological awareness, and hone their critical thinking skills.

An accredited workshop in the award-winning curriculum will be held at the Boone and Crockett Club's Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch near Dupuyer, Montana, from October 5 to 7. Through a partnership between Pheasants Forever, the Boone and Crockett Club, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and others, the workshop will be offered for a $30 registration fee. Participants will receive a complete set of LEP curriculum materials as well as meals and lodging. Graduate credit will be available at an additional cost. If you are interested in learning more about this unique opportunity, contact Pheasants Forever's education department at (612) 773-2000, E-mail: lep@pheasantsforever.org, or website: http://www.lep.org.—*Matt Holland, Pheasants Forever*

RAPTOR FESTIVAL PLANNED AT BRIDGER BOWL SKI AREA

The second annual Bridger Raptor Festival will be held October 11 and 12 at Bridger Bowl Ski Area north of Bozeman. Each autumn, birds of prey concentrate along the Bridger Mountain Range during their migration south. As many as 17 species can be seen, including golden eagles, bald

RANDY WOLD

Red-tailed hawk

eagles, northern harriers, sharp-shinned hawks, Cooper's hawks, red-tailed hawks, and American kestrels.

The Bridgers act as a funnel for migrating raptors, as westerly winds create updrafts along the north-south spine of the mountain range. The birds utilize these "thermals" to soar, which helps them conserve energy during the trip south.

Free presentations on raptor research, identification, and ecology will be held both Saturday and Sunday to celebrate this annual birdwatching spectacle. Weather permitting, Bridger Bowl will operate a lift to the upper mountain for a nominal fee. The festival is a cooperative effort between Bridger Bowl Ski Area, Big Sky Wild Care, HawkWatch International, and the U.S. Forest Service. For more information, contact Joyce Whitney or Bev Dixon at the Bozeman Ranger District (406-587-6920).

Dick Bucsis Named Biologist of the Year

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks wildlife biologist Dick Bucsis was recently honored by the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society as Biologist of the Year. The award was presented in March during the Montana Chapter's annual meeting.

Bucsis, who has been an FWP biologist since 1974, began his career in Shelby and moved to White Sulphur Springs in 1977. He began his training in wildlife management in 1967 at Montana State University and completed his master's degree in 1974.

Dick Bucsis

Over the past 22 years, Bucsis has worked tirelessly with hunters, outfitters, and landowners to increase hunter access to elk herds on private and public lands. A long-time champion of wildlife and wildlife habitat, he has been asked to critique countless U.S. Forest Service timber sale proposals and has spent hundreds of hours on the ground explaining the consequences of timber harvest on wildlife and defending basic wildlife management principles. These efforts have taken place under three governors, five directors, four division heads, three regional supervisors, and two game managers.—*Gary Olson, Wildlife Biologist, Region 4*

JOHN FRALEY

Pictured with Shikar-Safari Award winner Perry Brown (center) are Region 1 Warden Captain Ed Kelly (left) and Region 1 Supervisor Dan Vincent.

Shikar-Safari Award Goes to Perry Brown

Perry Brown, an FWP warden based in Columbia Falls, has been named the 1996 recipient of the prestigious Shikar-Safari Club International's Wildlife Officer of the Year award for Montana. A nine-year veteran of FWP's Enforcement Division, Brown began his career in Bozeman as a warden trainee before transferring to Chinook, where he served as the district game warden until moving to his current Columbia Falls assignment in 1993.

The award is presented annually by Shikar Safari Club International in recognition of meritorious service in the field of wildlife conservation and law enforcement. Brown was recognized for his backcountry law enforcement skills and the rapport he has established with hunters, anglers, and outfitters using wildland areas in the Columbia Falls vicinity, particularly the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. Also highlighted was his long-term involvement with FWP's Hunter Education Program, his performance as a field training officer for FWP's Enforcement Division, and his efforts to curb the illegal taking of bull trout.

"This is the most prestigious award a game warden can receive," said Region 1 warden captain Ed Kelly. "Perry has done a terrific job and the award is recognition of that. People in his district know that he is always fair and helpful."

Newly Revised Montana Bird Checklist Available

A newly revised brochure, "A List of Montana Birds," is hot off the press. A companion pamphlet to the 5th Edition of *Montana Bird Distribution*, the brochure can be used for gathering data on Montana's birds. Volunteer birdwatchers have used various editions of the brochure to keep careful records of their bird observations, which helps to better understand our bird populations.

The brochure is available free of charge from either the Montana Natural Heritage Program, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., Helena, MT 59620, or the Watchable Wildlife Program, 1420 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701. The 5th Edition of *Montana Bird Distribution* is available from Montana

Audubon, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624 ($8.00 plus $2.00 shipping).

FWP Online

Internet surfers can now catch a wave of information from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks at "http://fwp.mt.gov."

"We've drawn on the creative abilities of our staff to develop an Internet site that is attractive enough to hold a user's interest, and informative enough to give them a reason to come back," said FWP Director Pat Graham. "We hope this meets some of the increased requests for information we're receiving every day."

FWP's colorful homepage is organized in eight main areas: Fishing, Hunting, Parks, News, Education, Kid's Page, and Resources.

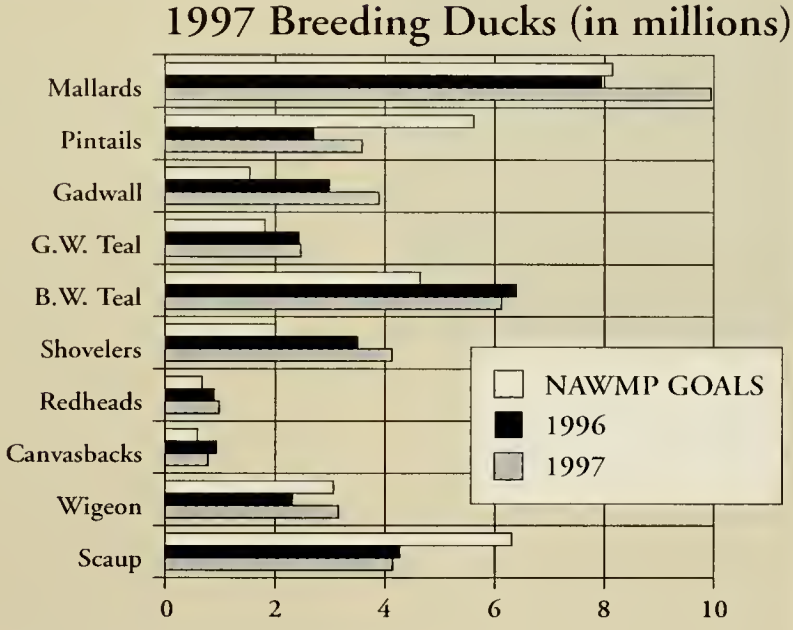
Within these areas are FWP hunting and fishing regulations, parks information, an area devoted to Montana's threatened and endangered species, descriptions of several Montana wildlife management areas, and rundowns on FWP's education program—including a complete guide to more than 70 educational trunks available to teachers and others.

"We consider the site to be in the initial phase of its development," Graham said. "We're proud of what we've accomplished so far, but the Internet is so dynamic that we know our site will continue to evolve as time goes on."

The site provides links to the Natural Resource Information System, Travel Montana, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, Montana Online, several important whirling disease information sites, and various news and weather links.

Graham said FWP is interested in receiving comments from Internet users. "The Internet is about communication," he said. "We've arranged for users to provide comments to FWP via our site. We're hoping they tell us what they like about our homepage, and how we might improve the electronic delivery of information about FWP to the citizens of Montana, schools, and the thousands of nonresidents who are interested in Montana and the natural and cultural resources we manage."

Waterfowling's Good Old Days Have Returned



Judging from numbers recently published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), 1996 was one of the best waterfowling seasons to come around in a long time. And it looks like 1997 might be even better.

FWS estimates that more than 13.8 million ducks and 260,000 geese were taken by hunters around the country during the 1996 hunting season. Those are 7 and 19 percent increases, respectively, over 1995. "Waterfowl populations and hunter success numbers have both been climbing steadily since the early 1990s," says Dr. Bruce Batt, chief biologist for Ducks Unlimited (DU). "In fact, more geese were taken last season than ever before. The numbers we're seeing now are just as high as in the benchmark days of the 1970s. And some of the statistics, like ducks-per-hunter, are higher than ever. These increases are the result of favorable weather conditions on the ducks' breeding grounds, government-sponsored conservation programs, and habitat restoration and enhancement work by DU and others all across North America."

As good as things were in 1996, they could be even better in 1997. Surveys counted more ducks than ever on the breeding grounds this summer. And that should mean a larger fall flight than 1996, which was projected at 89.5 million. The goal of the continent-wide North American Waterfowl Management Plan is to rebuild the fall flight to 100 million ducks in years of average environmental conditions. Ducks Unlimited and a variety of government agencies and private organizations are working together towards that goal.—*Ducks Unlimited*

TIP-MONT IS WORKING

By William Phippen
Information Officer, Helena

If your home were burglarized or if someone broke into your vehicle and removed some of its contents, you wouldn't waste much time calling the police to report the theft. Such criminal acts, regardless of the amount of property that may have been stolen, raise our ire because they violate our personal space. And we have learned what to do to help catch the culprits—call the authorities immediately—and take measures to lessen the chance that such a crime will happen again.

Over the last few years, increasing numbers of Montanans have learned that people who kill our elk, deer, or other wildlife resources outside of legal seasons or with no regard for harvest limits also are thieves—and that these thieves are likewise stealing their, although not exactly personal, property. They've become fed up with such thievery and are reaching for their phones to help ensure that justice is served on the perpetrators.

In 1985, the Montana Legislature authorized FWP to establish a toll-free fish and game violation hotline—1-800-TIP-MONT. Since that time, use of the line to report known or suspected violations of fish and wildlife laws has grown markedly.

Just what is our wildlife worth, and how much are these thieves, or poachers, getting away with? The civil (restitution) penalties set by the Montana Legislature that can be levied against persons convicted of wildlife thievery give some idea. An illegally taken moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, elk, or black bear can cost the person who killed it a $1,000 fine, plus $500 to $2,000 in restitution to the people of Montana for the animal's loss. The restitution value for buck deer and antelope recently was raised to $500 per animal.

But a monetary value can't reflect wildlife's actual value to society or to Montanans personally. What is it worth to be privileged to hunt a full-curl bighorn ram or a majestic six-point bull elk, or to watch your son or daughter catch his or her first wild rainbow trout? How many dollars are those experiences worth, and would any amount be sufficient if the chance of experiencing them were precluded by a poacher's bullet or disregard for harvest limits? In fact, many of the fishing and hunting experiences we enjoy are priceless. Fortunately, with the growing awareness of the TIP-MONT hotline, fewer wildlife criminals are getting away with their misdeeds.

In 1996, calls on the hotline resulted in 660 reports being sent to field wardens for further investigation (callers may remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward). Follow-up investigations led to issuance of a number of citations. At its most recent meeting in June, the TIP-MONT board of directors authorized payment of rewards totaling $2,750 to seven informants whose tips led to issuance of 15 misdemeanor and felony citations to eight individuals. This brought the total amount paid to informants since the inception of the TIP-MONT program to $48,200.

According to Mark Earnhardt, TIP-MONT program manager for FWP's Enforcement Division in Helena, the quality of information received on the TIP-MONT hotline has been steadily increasing since 1985. Earnhardt explained that, over time, hunters and other concerned citizens have learned what to look for when they suspect illegal activities. Providing information in an accurate and timely manner not only helps wardens bring wildlife law violators to justice, but saves wildlife that might have been targeted by poachers in the future.

In this light, Earnhardt provided the following tips to citizens who would like to provide the best information possible to help game wardens apprehend wildlife law violators:

(1) When you observe or become aware of a violation, gather as many facts as possible. If you won't be able to report the information immediately, write it down to keep the information fresh and accurate.

(2) What is the violation? What animals or other resources were involved? What happened to them? Where are they now?

(3) Where and at what time did it happen? Be as specific as you can. Note the time and consult a map if possible.

(4) Who is the violator? Do you know or can you reasonably get their name, address, and telephone number? **Don't put your safety at risk!**

(5) What is his or her physical description? If possible, note the violator's approximate weight and height, hair color, eye color, age, and clothing worn when the violation took place. It may be helpful to think, "What makes this person unique, or different from someone else who would match the same general description?" Maybe the person has a particularly short, thick neck, rather than just being "heavyset," or a thin, sparse moustache, rather than just a "moustache," or tinted, wire-frame glasses, rather than just "glasses."

(6) Describe the violator's vehicle or vessel, and try to get a license plate number or boat hull numbers. The above

RICHARD MOLNAR

What is it worth to be privileged to hunt a majestic bull elk or to take your son or daughter on his or her first hunting trip? These opportunities are priceless, and poachers steal them from us. Call 1-800-TIP-MONT (1-800-847-6668) if you observe a wildlife violation.

RON SPOMER

technique also is useful in describing a specific vehicle, even if you don't know or recognize vehicle makes and model years. To describe a vehicle as a "red pickup with a gun rack in the back window" doesn't narrow the field much in Montana. But to notice a dent in the door, or a chrome roll bar, or a broken antenna or tail light will help distinguish that vehicle from others that might otherwise match the description. Bumper and window stickers are another common, but unique, identifying marker.

(7) Is there any other physical evidence? What and where is it? Will it be moved soon? If so, when and where to? Unless there is imminent danger that physical evidence will be irrecoverably lost or destroyed, **do not** attempt to move, collect, touch, or even get near it. Doing so may taint the evidence, making it inadmissible in court, or destroy other significant evidence that a trained investigator will know to look for.

(8) Were there other witnesses or persons that may have additional information? Give their names, addresses, phone numbers or any additional information, as described above, that can help identify or locate them.

Above all, stay calm and don't worry—when you call TIP-MONT, a trained operator will ask you the questions necessary to get all the facts you gathered.

You may also call your nearest Montana game warden at any time. In many cases, an investigation can be initiated much faster if information is provided directly to the nearest warden, who will often have important firsthand knowledge of local people and places.

Whether you call TIP-MONT or the nearest warden, unless you state otherwise, you can be assured of complete confidentiality or anonymity.

If you are out of Montana and witness a game law violation, call North American Wildlife Safeguard at 1-800-WARDENS. Through this toll-free, anonymous hotline, you can be put in contact with any wildlife law enforcement agency in the United States or Canada. The hotline operates throughout the year from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Mountain Time.

Hunters and others traveling through Montana this fall will notice a new emphasis on TIP-MONT and that the message has taken on a new look. From billboards on the state's most heavily traveled highways to signs on the properties of landowners participating in FWP's Block Management Program, people are being encouraged to remember the TIP-MONT number and "make the call" if they observe a violation of wildlife laws. Protecting our valuable wildlife resources is our collective responsibility, and FWP's TIP-MONT hotline is providing the means for Montanans from all walks of life to do their part.

WHIRLING DISEASE CREATES RIPPLES

We look forward to each issue and read it "cover to cover"! The whirling disease problem will certainly have a "ripple" effect nationwide so I am happy to learn that some federal monies are being directed toward research to find a solution to same.

I especially enjoyed the article by Jerry Kustich about the kingfisher (July/August issue), and Jerry's description of the bird's "attitude." —*Ray Campbell, Athens, Ohio*

Raised in the West, I am a Montanan by choice, a fly-fisherman by passion—thus, an abiding interest in restoring and protecting our pastime.

Our blue-ribbon waters are overcrowded, in some cases to cheek-by-jowl proportions. Arguably, this has diminished the quality experience many anglers seek—solitude, if you will—and *does* carry environmental as well as aesthetic penalties. We are confronted by a serious dilemma here that must be resolved. It will not be easy.

Recreation and tourism rank second to agriculture as our state's biggest bread-winner with angling accounting for nearly $20 million in license fees and trickle-down economics. A fall-off of 20-percent-plus fishing-related revenues last year—whirling disease reports no doubt played a role—hit some pocketbooks hard in Ennis and West Yellowstone. I do not have the figures on Livingston, another angler-dependent town. The point here is that for many of us in this service industry—guides, tackle merchants, motels, restaurants, etc.—our livelihoods rely on increasing rather than reducing fishing pressure and access.

Like the trout, we have been hooked.

If fishermen decide to take their wallets elsewhere because of the ravages of whirling disease, which may or may not be pressure-connected, or over-competition at streamside...well, I don't have to describe the pain. Montana ranks near the bottom of all states in household income; we have some of the highest taxes (11 percent) on individual earnings and steep levies on business profits. Fuel taxes are the highest in the land; transportation costs tack on exorbitant hikes on most goods. We need every penny we can get and there are only three months of the year to do it in, at least in the outdoor leisure category.

Montanans must learn how to make things or lure in companies which do—environmentally friendly hi-tech, for example—to train and employ us, to offer alternatives without exploding the population. Presented with choices, we would not have to flood our rivers with fishermen.

Sorry for being windy. But herein may lie some of the answers to the dilemma of access and our hell-for-leather efforts to glut the market. An economist familiar with the ground rules once suggested we send a small delegation to New Zealand—its limited economic choices were similar to ours—and study how they solved the problem. The Kiwis dumped socialism in the mid-1980s, attracted technology by reducing taxes, kept some of the best fishing and access in the world, and never looked back. Last year, they had the second highest bond rating of any nation on the globe. Their standard of living is as astonishing as their natural surroundings.—*Nathan M. Adams, Ennis*

PROTECT HISTORICAL SITES

As a Montana resident currently on active duty with the Air Force at Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, New Mexico, I always enjoy reading *Montana Outdoors*. When I received the May/June issue I was happy to see not one but two articles on my favorite subjects: history/archaeology.

The articles "Sacred Ground" and "Protecting Our Heritage" were well written and touched a chord on my heart. I have loved relics and artifacts since I was about 10 years old, finding arrowheads and other artifacts on my parents' farm in Oregon.

It is truly a shame that people can destroy these priceless places without regard to the consequences of their actions. Petroglyphs, teepee rings, etc., are an important part of America's heritage and cannot be replaced.

What I cannot understand, however, is why historical areas which are protected from individuals are exploited by companies and government agencies. In Montana I visited a ghost town about 10 miles from Garnet between Lincoln and Missoula. It was a beautiful old town made up of old log buildings with solid rock foundations. From the evidence it was a 1900 -1915 era mining town. What nature was only slowly destroying, man was quickly tearing apart. A logging operation was in works and was literally removing this piece of history by bulldozers and other equipment.

In Nevada I have visited many ghost towns only a few years apart and found the difference dreadful, as vandals take the town apart board by board and adobe brick by adobe brick. Some of these are indirectly destroyed by the government as ranch owners are taxed on the buildings and remove them to save on taxes. They should be rewarded for preserving them; not rewarded for destruction.

I could give many other examples; however, I think the point is clear—civilization and progress destroy as much or more of historical areas as vandals. Laws should be strictly enforced against defacement of petroglyphs/pictographs, removal of parts of obviously historical buildings, etc. But the law should also require the study and removal of artifacts from any site discovered while building roads, shopping centers, etc. This would be required before allowing construction.

Please keep up the wonderful work you are doing with fish and wildlife and continue to supplement with occasional articles for those of us who are not only hunters and fishermen but also historians.—*Daniel Comer, Los Lunas, New Mexico*

Contributors

Haviland

Elk hunting in Montana is more than a sport. It's a tradition, as well as a source of highly prized food. Hunters like **John Haviland** begin the season bowhunting for bugling bulls in the warm days of September and, depending on their luck, may end it in freezing temperatures and snow on Thanksgiving weekend. By that time, says Haviland, elk hunting has taken on a certain sense of urgency. The burning question among acquaintances, at the gas station and the grocery store, is "Get Your Elk?" (page 2). Haviland, an avid elk hunter, is a Missoula-based free-lance writer.

Fraley

According to **John Fraley** and **Tim Pool**, Montana's Hunter Education Program has racked up an impressive set of accomplishments since its inception in 1957. For one thing, thanks to gun safety training, the number of hunting-related accidents has dropped from an annual average of 75 in the 1940s to about 10 in recent years. Today nearly 1,000 volunteer hunter education instructors across the state donate 60,000 hours of their time each year to certify 6,500 students. A bowhunter education course has been added to program, and a new hunter education manual has been written that emphasizes ethics and student participation. To learn more about this remarkable success story, turn to "Preserving the Tradition" on page 8. Fraley is an FWP information officer in Kalispell and Pool is the Montana hunter education coordinator in FWP's Helena office.

Pool

The white-tailed deer in North America has been on a roller-coaster ride since colonial times. From a population that may have exceeded 34 million at the beginning of the 1500s, says **Sam Curtis**, whitetail numbers were reduced to an estimated 300,000 by the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1850 and 1900, the height of western expansion, the whitetail was pounded to near extinction in many parts of the country. Today, thanks to conservation efforts and the natural resiliency of this adaptable animal, the continental whitetail population stands at more than 14 million. In Montana, the growth of the whitetail population has come primarily in the wake of agricultural development. "Whitetails are still pioneering new habitats wherever they can," he says, "including the suburbs of Montana cities." Curtis, whose article begins on page 20, is a free-lance writer living in Bozeman.

Curtis

In recent years, loss of public hunting opportunities on private land has been a major concern of Montana's sportsmen and wildlife managers—so important, in fact, that Governor Racicot created a Private Land/Public Wildlife Advisory Council a few years ago to formulate solutions to the problem. One solution was an innovative source of funding that allowed a major expansion in FWP's Block Management Program. "In 1996," says **Alan Charles**, "more than 130,000 hunters recreated on the 7 million acres made available by 881 block management cooperators." To help evaluate the Block Management Program, FWP personnel conducted a mail survey of program participants last spring. Most of the more than 4,500 written comments received from hunters and landowners were positive. For a sampling of these comments and a summary of survey results, turn to "Block Management: What Landowners and Hunters Say" on page 25. Charles is FWP's landowner/sportsman coordinator in Helena.

MO thanks the following artists and photographers for their contributions to this issue: **Denver Bryan**, **Dusan Smetana**, **Dale C. Spartas**, and **Randy Wold**, Bozeman; **Karan Charles**, Miles City; **Tim Christie**, Coeur d'Alene, ID; **Elizabeth Hazelwood**, Boise, ID; **Howard Johnson**, Helena; **Donald M. Jones**, Troy; **Richard Mousel** and **Rodney Schlecht**, Great Falls; **Michael S. Quinton**, Slana, AK; **Conrad Rowe**, Seeley Lake; **Ron Spomer**, Troy, ID; **Barbara Thomas**, Kalispell; and **Dan Wentz**, Hot Springs. Thanks also to the following employees who work for the department: **John Fraley**, Kalispell, and **Mike Korn**, Helena.

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